John Calybite

(d. c. 450)

BRIEFING

John Calybite (or John Calabites, Calibita, Chalybita, Calabytes, Kalabytes, Kalybites, Kalyvitis (Greek: Ἰωάννης ὁ Καλυβίτης); died c. 450) was a Greek monk and hermit who is venerated as a saint by the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. He left home at a young age and for several years was a monk in Jerusalem. He returned home disguised as a beggar, and his parents did not recognize him, but gave him a hut to live in. He revealed himself to his mother when on his deathbed. His feast day is celebrated on 15 January.

SOURCES

Monks of Ramsgate's account

The monks of St Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, wrote in their Book of Saints (1921),

> *John Chalybita (St.) Hermit (Jan. 15)*
> *(5th cent.) Born in Constantinople of noble and wealthy parents, when about twelve years old he secretly left his home to become a monk near Jerusalem. After serving God manfully in his monastery for about six years his Abbot gave him permission to revisit his home. On his way he disguised himself as a beggar, and his mother, not knowing him, drove him from her door. He thenceforth subsisted on the charity of his parents in a little hut in the neighbourhood, spending his time in prayer and good works. After three years, Our Lord visited him and told him that his trial was over. John then sent for his mother, and showing her the Book of the Gospels she had given him in childhood, died in her arms. This happened about the middle of the fifth century. Some authors transfer to Rome the scenes of the closing years of this Saint.*

Roman Martyrology

The Roman Martyrology includes:

> *January 23 ... In Rome, Saint John Calybite, who lived for some time unknown in a corner of his father's house, then in a cottage near it, in the isle of Tiber. His parents only recognized him at his death, in 469. Having then become celebrated by several miracles, he was interred in the same places, where a church was afterwards built in his honor.*

Butler's account

The hagiographer Alban Butler (1710–1773) wrote in his Lives of the Primitive Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints, under January 15,

> *St. John Calybite, Recluse He was the son of Eutropius, a rich nobleman in Constantinople. He secretly left home to become a monk among the Acœmetes. After six years he returned disguised in the rags of a beggar, and subsisted by the charity of his parents, as a stranger, in a little hut near their house; hence he was called the Calybite. He sanctified his soul by wonderful patience, meekness, humility, mortification, and prayer. He discovered himself to his mother, in his agony, in the year 450, and, according to his request, was buried under his hut; but his parents built over his tomb a stately church, as the author of his life mentions. Cedrenus, who says it stood in the western quarter of the city, calls it the church of poor John; Zonaras, the church of St. John Calybite. An old church, standing near the bridge of the isle of the Tiber in Rome, which bore his name, according to an inscription there, was built by Pope Formosus, (who died in 896,) together with an hospital. From which circumstance Du Cange 5 infers, that the body of our saint, which is preserved in this church, was conveyed from Constantinople to Rome, before the broaching of the Iconoclast heresy under Leo the Isarian, in 706: but his head remained at Constantinople till after that city fell into the hands of the Latins, in 1204; soon after which it was brought to Besanzon in Burgundy, where it is kept in St. Stephen's church, with a Greek inscription round the case. The church which bears the name of Saint John Calybite, at Rome, with the hospital, is now in the hands of religious men of the order of St. John of God. According to a MS. life, commended by Baronius, St. John Calybite flourished under Theodosius the Younger, who died in 450: Nicephorus says, under Leo, who was proclaimed emperor in 457; so that both accounts may be true. On his genuine Greek acts, see Lambecius, Bibl. Vind. t. 8. p. 228. 395; Bollandus, p. 1035, gives his Latin acts the same which we find in Greek at St. Germain-des-Prez. See Montfaucon, Bibl. Coislianæ, p. 196. Bollandus adds other Latin acts, to which he gives the preference. See also Papebroch, Comm. ad Januarium Græcum metricum, t. 1. Maij. Jos. Assemani, in Calendaria Univ. ad 15 Jan. t. 6. p. 76. Chatelain, p. 283, &c.*